

with Compliments

SUEZ AS A HEALTH RESORT,

WITH
NOTES BY THE WAY.

BY
W. SINCLAIR THOMSON, M.D., F.R.C.S. Edin.,
Late Consulting Surgeon General Hospital, Peterborough,
AND
Medical Officer of Health,
&c., &c., &c.

Read before the West London Medico-Chirurgical
Society, December 4th, 1883.

London:
JOHN BALE & SONS, 87-89, GREAT TITCHFIELD STREET,
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SUEZ AS A HEALTH RESORT,

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—The curative effect of the ocean climate is so well known and appreciated, and the benefits to be derived from a long sea-voyage, especially in well selected chest cases, is now fully recognised. Too much regard is, I fear, often bestowed by the physician to the local symptom—the weakened lung, the feeble stomach; or the irritable nervous system—to the exclusion of the equally important question, Will the change suit the temperament of the patient as well as his complaint? I regret to say that I have often seen patients return from the long voyage to Australia thoroughly disheartened by the monotony of the five or six weeks of ship life. I have seen a hypochondriacal youth at Mont d'Ore undergoing all the worry of the aspirations, Homage, Pulverisation treatment, with nothing earthly the matter with him beyond mental fatigue. If we were more particular in our selection of health resorts, spas, *routes*, and hotels, according to our patient's power of bearing fatigue, their digestive necessities, tastes in scenery, and manner of life or available amusements, the public would not be able to say, "My doctor sent me here to get rid of me." Personally, I have hitherto enjoyed excellent health, and have, in selecting a holiday

route, been guided by friends, or have visited health resorts, chiefly in order to gain professional information ; however, by the end of last winter, I found it was a case of “physician, heal thyself.” My friends prescribed six weeks and a short sea voyage, so I took a return ticket to Suez and back through the Mediterranean, fourteen days out, fourteen days back, and fourteen days in Egypt. The result has been so entirely satisfactory, that I hope some notes, taken by the way, may be of interest.

To begin with, I was fortunate in my ship, *The Massilia*, bound for Sidney, 5,000 horse power, one of the Peninsula and Oriental Company’s largest vessels. She is magnificently fitted up with the electric light and bells, baths all that could be wished, of these there are twelve, two of which are complex, supplying the water in six different ways, viz., combined spray, wave and douche, douche, sitz-spray, shower, spinal spray, and douche, adjustable hot or cold salt water ; the civil bath attendant also supplies fresh water for sponging after the salt for those to whose skin the salt might prove irritating. Again, in the position of my berth I was lucky ; in my cabin the berths were on different sides, not over or under each other, I had the one opposite the port, so that in case we should ship a sea I might not have the discomfort of wet bedding. Before coming on board I provided myself with a deck folding chair and a small candle lamp, which is most necessary as the lights are turned out at half-past ten or eleven. One of “Sherriff’s Illustrated Route Charts,” to be obtained at 9, Dyers Buildings, Holborn, E.C., will be found useful. We had a mixed native and English crew, the natives with their varied features, complexions, and dress, added to the picturesqueness of our surroundings. The crew mustered 187, passengers 130, total on board 317: colonists returning to their homes refreshed by a visit to the old country, some for

rest, others for change, some with the beginning of disease, others in the last stage of the Weir-Mitchell treatment, with their nurse-companions, the massage being still regularly applied. We are now on our way, enjoying a perfectly pure sea air, abundance of light and free exposure to the sea breezes, regular exercise up and down the long deck covered with a sheltering awning. As the house we live in affects our health at home, so the floating house—the ship—is an important element in the compound agent, a sea voyage. The *Massilia* was perfect, the weather for February and March was all that could be desired; then the feeding (as is always the case in the P. and O. Company) excellent and abundant, beef-tea going about freely for those whose stomachs wanted coaxing. It may be well to quote some of the regulations on board the Peninsula and Oriental Navigation Company's steamers:—

NOTICE.

HOURS FOR MEALS.

	Breakfast.	Luncheon.	Dinner.	Tea.
First class	9 a.m.	1.0 p.m.	6 p.m.	8.0 p.m.
Children	7.30 a.m.	11.0 p.m.	noon	4.30 p.m.
Second class	7.45 a.m.	11.0 a.m.	1.0 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
				By Order.

I give a copy of the menus for the day:—

BILL OF FARE.

“*Massilia*.”

BREAKFAST.

Porridge. Kipperred Herrings.
Rump Steak and Tomatos,
Devilled Poultry. Buttered Eggs.
Grilled Bacon. Curry and Rice.

LUNCHEON.

Soup. Barley Broth.
 Cold Roast Leg of Mutton.
 Galantine of Veal.
 Roast ribs of Beef.
 Brawn. Ham.
 Corned Round Beef.
 Cheese. Salad.
 Fried Potatos.
 Currant Cake.

DINNER.

Soup :—Tomato. Fillets of Bream à la Cardinal.
 Joint :—Roast Leg of Mutton and R. C. Jelly.
 Entrées :—Fillets of Beef with Olives.
 Cauliflower à la creme.
 Poultry :—Roast Ducks and Green Peas.
 Curry :—Chicken.
 Pastry :—Caramel Pudding.
 Vol-au-vent of plums. Swiss Roll.

Tea and Coffee can be had from six to eight in the morning. Breakfast at nine, luncheon at one, dinner at six. All liberal meat meals, which are comprised into nine consecutive hours out of the twenty-four. This is unfortunate, but is, I understand, unavoidable, where there are so many things to consider, besides the diet of the first-class passengers.

On the fourth of March, six days after leaving home, I find in my notes the following entry, "I feel much better, sleep soundly, my dyspeptic symptoms begin to improve, though I still have slight pain after food, to-day all my unpleasant symptoms have vanished."

This I call liberal fare, and it looked better on the tables of the brightly lit marbled walled saloon of the "Massilia" than I can possibly picture it on paper. Curry plays a constant figure in the P. and O. dietary programme, and in connection with the subject I shall here offer a

word of professional advice. To the gouty, or those who are liable to eczema and especially to those who live carefully at home, I should advise moderation, as the three meals are so close, that only two can be partaken of freely. If the passenger enjoys his breakfast, let him simply make a nominal luncheon, if an indifferent breakfast, let him make the mid-day meal his principal one.

Invalids with delicate appetites, should not be sent on long sea voyages, as a certain amount of monotony in food is scarcely to be avoided. In a short trip to Gibraltar (five days), a longer one to Malta (ten days), or to Suez (fourteen days), there is no chance of monotony in food or climate. I shall now give the thermometric record and the run.

THERMOMETRIC RECORD AND THE RUN.

S. S. MASSILIA.

POSITION AT NOON.

Lat.

Dial altered distance.

Date.	N.	W.	Run.	For.	Agst.	Malta.	Bal.	Ther.	Remarks.
1885	50.14	2.55	202	...	...	...	29.89	65	Moderate wind and fine.
Feb. 27	45.56	6.42	243	...	...	2064	30.28	65	
28	42.25	9.26	301	16	...	1811	30.10	66	Moderate wind and overcast.
Mar. 1	37.16	9.67	318	20	...	1510	30.22	70	Moderate wind and fine.
2	36.17	3.03 E.	322	12	...	1192	30.24	67	Moderate wind and overcast.
3	36.58	3.38	325	...	25	870	30.22	70	Bright, breeze, fine.
4	37.19	10.08	318	...	26	545	30.18	76	Bright, airy & fine
5	34.48	19.40	262	...	26	230 To Prt. Said.	30.20	67	Bright, breeze, and fine.
7	33.21	25.45	315	...	...	675	30.26	67	Bright.
8	31.41	31.28	307	...	25	360	...	...	Bright, breeze, and fine.
9	...	...	...	...	25	5	30	65	Bright, breeze, and fine.

The temperature all the way was most conducive to health and we were absent from England during that unpropitious month of March. As we pass through the wide

blue Mediterranean with a temperature on deck of 70° F., on one side the snow topped mountains of the Spanish range, Sierra Nevada, on the right looking over the soft green and brown hills on the Algerian coast to the white tops of the Atlas range beyond, I felt the moment was sublime.

Leaving Port Said (where I should not advise any invalid to remain) and passing through the canal, we anchor in the Bitter Lake for the night, and the following night saw us safely at rest in Suez Bay. Next morning we are taken on shore by Captain Roberts in his steam launch and are hospitably received by Mr. Sutherland, manager of the Suez hotel. The hotel is well situated, facing the Maritime Canal, every ship passing through can be seen, the roof, which is flat, commands a view of the wells of Moses, the harbour, the mouth of the canal, the town of Suez with a chalet of the Kedive, and the British Victoria Hospital on the north side, a range of hills on east and west, the shades and black violet tints on whose sides at sunrise and sunset I have never seen anything to surpass.

The charges at the hotel are moderate, twelve shillings a day paid weekly, eight shillings for servants and children, inclusive of cold baths. Suez is noted for its purity of atmosphere and agreeable climate in winter, and is most beneficial for the treatment of pulmonary affections. There I found staying in the hotel an invalid who had hæmoptysis before leaving England, and who came here in a very weak condition with night sweats, oppression about the chest with loss of bodily weight. Soon after his arrival the cough and oppression disappeared, he gained flesh, and there was no return of the hæmoptysis. He amused himself by sketching and photographing in the neighbourhood, and has lately been to see me, looking quite set up.

The following table will speak for the uniformity, dryness and salubriousness of the climate. Suez, with its peculiar scenery and its vicinity to many sacred localities, its ponies and donkeys with the donkey boys, who all speak slang English, the interesting Native Bazaar, plentiful and good provisions, beautiful oranges, apples, pears and fine vegetables, make it a suitable resort for invalids.

Thermometrical observations taken at Suez during the years 1876, 1877 and 1878.

For the purpose of analysis, the year has been divided into two six-monthly periods, viz., 1st from October to March, both inclusive, which may be termed the winter season, and from April to September inclusive, which represents the summer season. The observations in highest and lowest temperature were taken with a maximum and minimum regular thermometer, the mean readings of which are given in each month. The extremes of temperature as registered by these instruments are also given monthly. The hygrometric state of the air was determined by observations of a dry and wet bulb thermometer taken ordinarily at the hours of 9 a.m. noon, and 4 p.m. west time, but during the months of May to October, the observations were taken at 5 p.m. in the shade on the terrace of the Suez Hotel, five feet above the roof. The monthly mean of these observations at the above hours are given with the tables. From the observations of the dry bulb thermometer, it appears that the mean temperature of the three years was $77^{\circ}9$ Fr., that of the six summer months, $68^{\circ}9$ giving a mean average of 18° or 9° above the average yearly temperature in the summer months, and the same below the yearly average in the winter period. The heat during the summer period cannot be considered oppressive, while the winter temperature was pleasant, and the climate as regards temperature, may be considered fairly

equable. The depression of the wet bulb thermometer below the dry bulb was in the average of the three years $12^{\circ}2$ Fr., that in the summer months being $16^{\circ}1$, and in the winter months $8^{\circ}3$, differing $3^{\circ}9$ in opposite directions from the yearly mean, indicating a comparatively airy atmosphere, with small hygrometric changes. The average highest and lowest temperatures, as registered by the maximum and minimum thermometers, are in the three whole years $85^{\circ}85$ and $60^{\circ}65$, giving a difference of range of $26^{\circ}2$. The results in the summer period are $96^{\circ}4$ and $67^{\circ}8$, range $28^{\circ}6$, and in the winter months $77^{\circ}3$ and $53^{\circ}5$, range $23^{\circ}8$. The range in the summer and winter six-monthly periods, differ each only $2^{\circ}4$ from the yearly mean, and confirm the equable temperature of the climate as referred to temperature only. The extreme change of temperature as given by the maximum and minimum registry are, in the three whole years, by the maximum thermometer $99^{\circ}7$ and $77^{\circ}6$, range $22^{\circ}1$. In the summer months they are $111^{\circ}7$ and $86^{\circ}8$, range $24^{\circ}9$, and in the winter period $87^{\circ}8$ and $68^{\circ}4$, range $19^{\circ}4$.

The extreme range of temperature during the summer months differ from that of the whole year by $+ 2^{\circ}8$, while the extreme range during the winter months differs by $+ 2^{\circ}7$, variations slight and in opposite directions, which give further proof of equable climatic temperature.

My chief object in publishing these notes is to point out the advantage of Suez as a winter health station. For all cases of phthisical and bronchial affections, in the early stage of phthisis where there is a general delicacy of constitution, in cases of bronchial irritation, indeed in all cases where a dry and bracing air, bright sunshine and freedom from rain are required, the Suez winter climate claims a most important part. For those, who for reasons before mentioned, the long sea voyage is not practicable,

a sojourn at Suez might be an alternative. I should like to see the hotel fitted up with more modern improvements and better adapted for the wants of invalids, or a branch building arranged for those who might become permanent residents, and who could retire from the constant change and commotion, incidental to the principal hotel in such an important port as Suez.

THERMOMETRICAL OBSERVATIONS TAKEN AT SUEZ, EGYPT.

Month.	Max.	Min.	9 a.m.		Noon.		4 p.m.		Extremes.		Extremes.	
			Wet.	Dry.	Wet.	Dry.	Wet.	Dry.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.
Jan., 1876	65°	43½°	47°	50½°	53½°	62°	53°	61°	57°	76°	35°	55°
„ 1877	70½°	46	50	54	58	65	57	65½°	67	76	39	51
Feb., 1876	78½°	48	53½°	58	58½°	68	56½°	67	65	78	41	55
„ 1877	74	50	55	60½°	57½°	69½°	58	67½°	66	87	44	56
Mar., 1876	82	54	60	66	65	76½°	63	75	67	96	46	69
„ 1877	78½°	52	57	63	58½°	72	60	73½°	65	95	43	64
April, 1876	89½°	60½°	65½°	74	68	83	66	82	77	109	54	70
„ 1877	91	57½°	64½°	74	67	83	66	82	77	105	53	69
May, 1876	96	66	68	79	70½°	88	69	88	82	114½°	60	73
„ 1877	98	63	72½°	81	70½°	90	68	89	83	119½°	57	76
June, 1876	102	69½°	71	84	72	93	70	93	89	119	65	74
„ 1877	103	69	72½°	87	73	92	71	91½°	91	114	63	76
July, 1876	100	71½°	73	84	73	92	70½°	92	91	115	70	74
„ 1877	100	72	73	82	74	92½°	72½°	94	92	116	68	74
Aug., 1876	98	72	73½°	83	73½°	91	72	92	93	114	68	75
„ 1877	100	73	74	84	75	93	72½°	94	92	112	71	77
Sept., 1876	93	69	71	79	72	87	72	89	86	104	63	74
„ 1877	98	71½°	74	82	73½°	96	72½°	92	90	109	65	76
Oct., 1876	92	65	69	76	71	83	70	83	86	100	59	69
„ 1877	93	66½°	69½°	78	73	88	73	86	84	109½°	62	76
Nov., 1876	81	56	62	67	65	79	64	74	70	95	49	71
„ 1877	79	58	63½°	68	65	74½°	63	73	73	88	54	63
Dec., 1876	71	52	55	58	61½°	69½°	63½°	69	57	79	46	56
„ 1877	73	53	56	60	62½°	69	60	67	67	83	45	65*
Jan., 1878	69	47	51	54½°	57½°	64½°	56½°	63	60	73	39	55
Feb., 1878	67	47	51	55	55	63	53	62	60	76	42	55
Mar., 1878	77½°	51½°	56	62	61½°	72	60½°	71	66	95	45	60
April, 1878	88	57	63	72	66	80	64	81	72	102½°	51	65
May, 1878	94½°	62½°	66½°	78	69	86½°	66½°	85	85	110	54	72½°
June, 1878	100½°	69½°	71	83	72½°	92½°	70	92½°	91½°	120	63	75
July, 1878	100½°	73	72¾°	85	73	93¾°	71¾°	94¾°	91½°	112	69	77
Aug., 1878	104½°	74½°	73½°	86½°	76	96	73½°	96	95	120	70	88
Sept., 1878	96	69	74¾°	83	73½°	89	71½°	89	85	107	65	78
Oct., 1878	90	64½°	68	75	68¾°	82	68½°	82½°	82	97	58	70
Nov., 1878	83	57½°	64	67½°	67½°	76	65	74	76	91	46	67
Dec., 1878	74½°	51¼°	57	61	62½°	71	62	70½°	63½°	85	42	64

Taken in the shade, on Terrace of Suez Hotel, five feet above the roof.

* Note 5 p.m. Between May and October.

And now a concluding word about the return home. I shall not particularise further than to say that my homeward trip was a greater contrast to my delightful outgoing one, than I thought possible. To begin with, there are twenty-four hours quarantine, imposed on vessels from Bombay, and passengers are not allowed on shore. We were told by the P. and O. agents, that we must go on board in Suez Harbour with them at six in the morning, twenty-four hours before the ship sailed, or we would have to do so afterwards at our own expense. I cannot conceive any reason either for the quarantine, or in going on board so long before the ship sails, except to irritate uselessly passengers. When we did get into the canal, we were aground there several times, and it occupied five days getting to Port Said, whereas in the outward journey forty-eight hours did it. At last, when we did get clear of land we experienced cold, dirty weather, with head-winds all the way home. This ship was a dirty and old-fashioned one, with many invalids returning from India. No music saloon or smoke room on deck, and with other discomforts which I need not mention, the voyage was not a pleasant one. I should therefore say that going out we can select our ship, and probably learn something of her officers. We can fairly, at times, forecast the weather, but we have no choice on our homeward trip. I should, therefore, advise the short sea route from Alexandria, by Naples or Marseilles, rather than fourteen days spent in an uncomfortable ship, probably in company with many who are themselves depressed from illness for companions.

